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in Battersea Park

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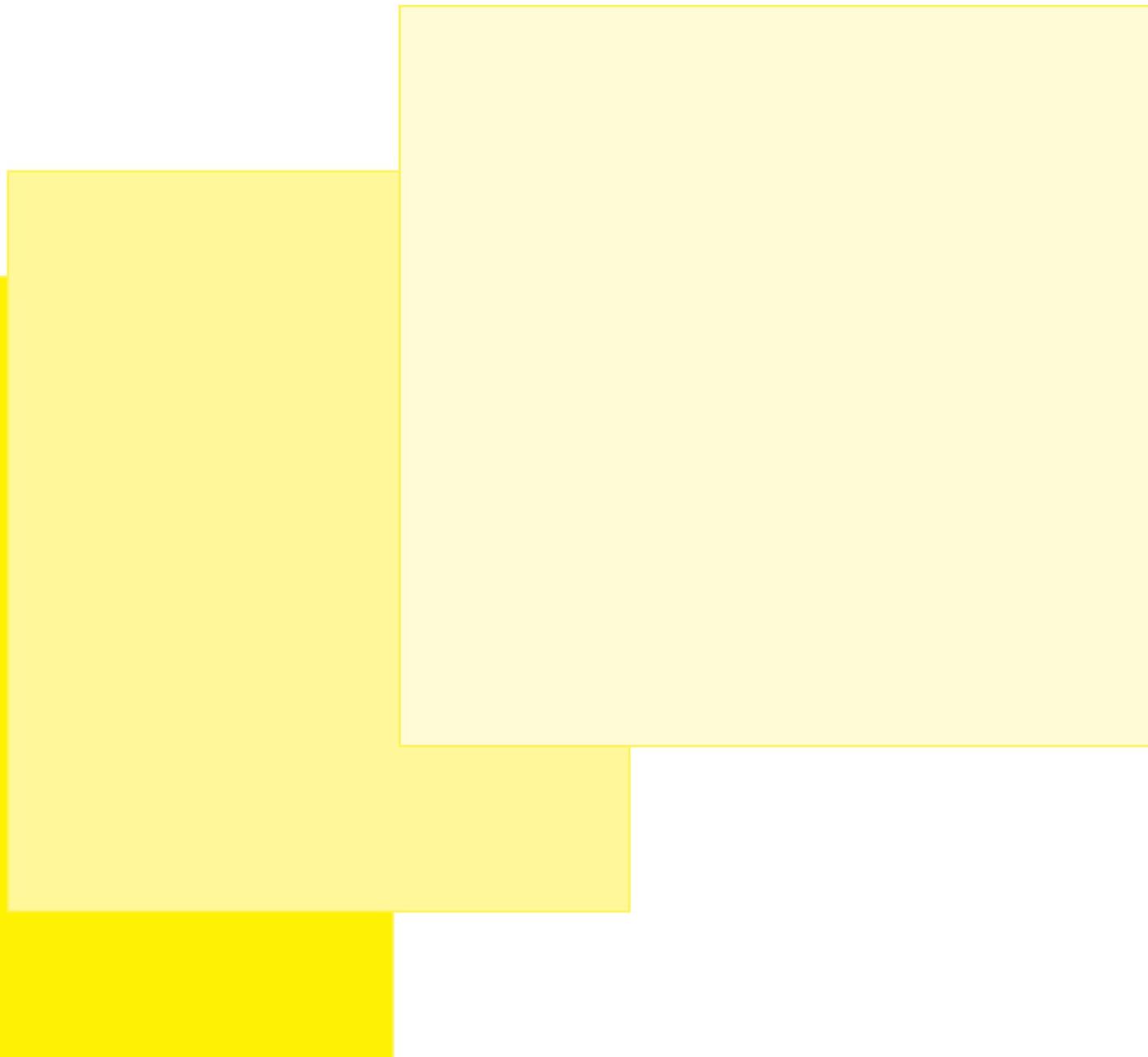
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Cover photo: Nicola Hicks's (1985) "Monument to the Brown Dog,"  
Battersea Park, London, UK.



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## Preface

I teach history at university level. I first encountered the ‘brown dog affair’ while searching for local connections to the big themes of my courses. In this case, local connections are many.

University College London is my academic home, and it was deeply involved in this story. In the decades around 1900, the university played a key role in the massive growth of experimental physiology and medical research. The buildings where this work was done are the same I use today for teaching its history. The students who protested in this story were predecessors to those who sit in my lectures. I can see in the faces of old photographs the same passions, excitements, and distractions I now see in the faces of our students one term to the next. I think of the men and women of the brown dog affair every time I walk past the university’s main building and its memorial to the Great War. It was their generation who rose to service in 1914.



**Figure 1:** Nicola Hicks’s “Monument” in Battersea Park, London. Unveiled in 1985. Located on Woodland Walk since 1994.

Nicola Hicks's "Monument to the Brown Dog" in Battersea Park is a fascinating object for me as a historian. Seen from one angle, it's a lovely piece of sculpture, a study of form and expression by a young artist in the process of discovering her own creativity. I'm no specialist interpreter of sculpture, but even I can see here elements of the exceptional style she has brought to modern art.

From another angle, this statue is a memorial, an attempt to recover something lost that someone wanted to remember. That memory strikes me as specific, deliberate, and sharply pointed.

From a third, it's a living object, serving new purposes to new generations. I have visited Battersea Park regularly for nearly two decades. Every time I walk past, I see fresh flowers, or some other tributes, placed nearby. Sometimes it's a carefully prepared bouquet. Once, it was a single recently plucked flower, left behind, no doubt, to serve a more recent memory.

As a career intellectual, I embrace anything that provokes thinking and reflection. I intend this book as just such an aid. I don't aim to campaign or sentimentalize. Rather, I seek a launchpad for flights along the many directions made possible from the material within. Hick's memorial makes me think and wonder. That's all the reason we need to look more closely.

*Joe Cain  
London 2013*

in Battersea Park

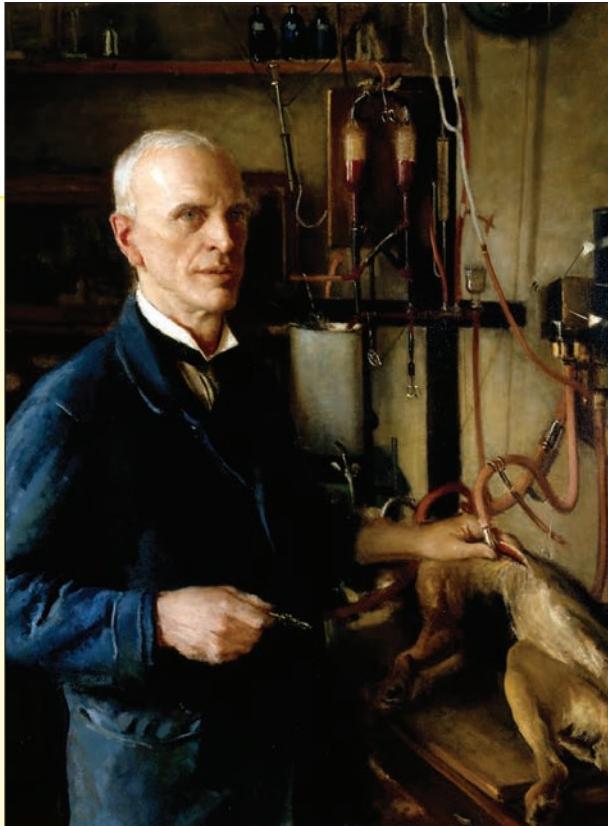
## Remembering a little brown dog

The “brown dog affair” is well known around University College London (UCL). In the nineteenth century, UCL heavily invested in medical research and physiology. It became famous for studies of the heart, for biochemistry, and for research into hormones.

Early in the twentieth century, the medical sciences were booming at UCL. New facilities. New ideas. Much, much more activity.

Science can be a costly business. Physiology in this period used live animals, and rapid growth in the volume of research meant many more experiments involving vivisection. The practice had been regulated and licensed in the UK since 1876, so numbers were monitored.

The annual number of vivisecting experiments quadrupled between 1890 and 1900. In 1906,



**Figure 2:** Ernest Henry Starling by Walter Westley Russell (1926). Starling was a driving force behind UCL's growth in medical sciences. He was an expert on heart physiology and contributed to the discovery of hormones and their function. William Bayliss was his collaborator, also his brother in law. The graphic nature of this portrait speaks to the clinical perspective held by researchers. (Source: UCL Art Museum, University College London LDUCS5673)



**Figure 3:** Louis Pasteur caricature from *Vanity Fair*, 08 January 1887. Louis Pasteur and Claude Bernard were heroes to experimental medicine, but villains to anti-vivisection campaigners.

roughly two thousand separate experiments were registered under the law. This was double the number registered in 1900. Researchers were proud of their accomplishments. They spoke of extraordinary discoveries and giant leaps in medical understanding.

Actions provoke reactions. Campaigning for animal protection rose in parallel with the experiments. Groups devoted to prevention of cruelty to animals launched in the 1820s. Attention first focused on beasts of burden. With the growth of experimental biology (and the growing practice of keeping pets), priorities shifted. By the time of national regulation in the 1870s, anti-vivisection campaigning was well-established, vocal, and effective.

In 1903, those for and against the use of animals in research focused their attention on a libel suit brought by Dr. William Bayliss (UCL) against Mr. Stephen Coleridge (National Anti-Vivisection Society). Coleridge had accused Bayliss of violating



the terms of his vivisection license, thereby breaking the law. He repeatedly branded Bayliss as a torturer, hiding behind the safety curtain of medical research. In reply, Bayliss charged libel and took his case to court. The press loudly took sides. Both pro-research and anti-vivisection groups created from this case a new cause célèbre.

Ultimately, Bayliss won his suit; Coleridge was found guilty of libel and ordered to pay £2000 in compensation.

Sympathetic newspapers and organizations launched a public subscription to raise this money. Their campaign was more successful than planned, and much more money was raised than needed for the fine.

**Figure 4:** Postcard by Cecil Aldin, early 20th century. Anti-vivisection campaigners focused public attention on unsavoury practices, such as the supplying stray animals to university physiological laboratories. This was illegal. (Source: Mary Evans Library 10140126)

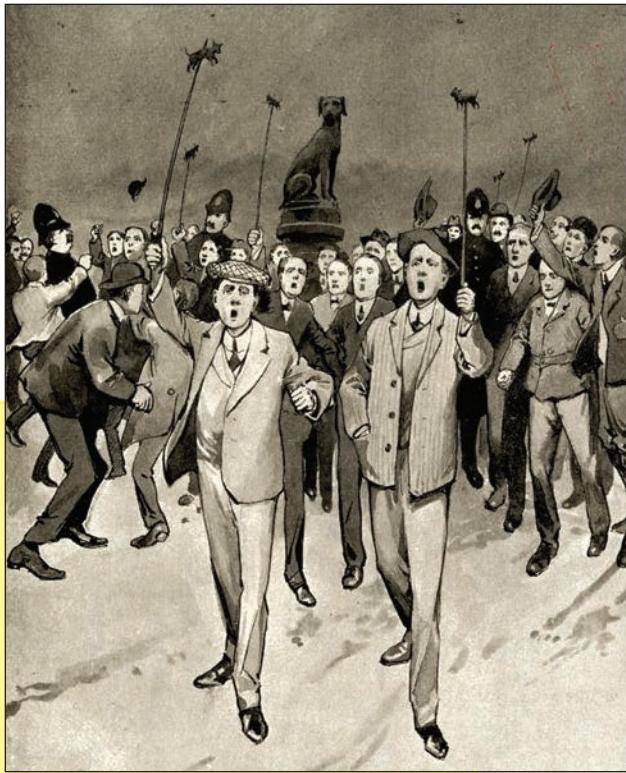
The trial had focused on the treatment of one brown terrier dog, and campaigners used this story to create an icon. Quickly, plans were drawn for a memorial statue to commemorate this sacrificial lamb. Anna Louisa Woodward, founder of the World League Against Vivisection, is credited with first suggesting a memorial. She commissioned sculptor and stone mason, Joseph James Whitehead (1868-1951) and his London-based company, J. Whitehead and Son, to create a simple memorial.

The original “brown dog statue” was a bronze figure of a terrier set atop a carved granite water fountain, complete with a drinking trough for dogs. It stood 7'6" (2.29m). It was unveiled on 15 September 1906 in the Latchmere Recreation Ground, a park in Battersea, London. The memorial’s unveiling took place on the park’s opening day.

The location was important. Battersea was far away (in every sense) from UCL. It was across the Thames River, in a newly built working-class housing estate. It was in a park surrounded by family homes; in an anti-establishment, politically progressive borough. It was in an economic environment a million miles away from the privileged young men of UCL’s medical school. The Latchmere Estate also happened to be served by the small National Anti-Vivisection Hospital. Opened in 1903, the “anti-viv” was well-known for prohibiting animal experiments on its premises and refusing to employ physicians who held vivisector licenses or who openly supported animal research. Also in the neighbourhood since 1871 was the Battersea Dogs Home, a refuge for strays. Latchmere was chosen to maximise the memorial’s impact.



**Figure 5:** Joseph Whitehead's memorial statue and fountain (note trough for dogs at base) prior to its installation in Latchmere Recreation Ground in 1906. Total cost for manufacture was £171. (Source: Wellcome Library, London L0023179)



**Figure 6:** Medical students from London universities, the “anti-doggers,” protest the brown dog memorial and its inscription.  
(Source: Ford 1908)

The timing for this statue’s unveiling was important, too. In the same month, a Royal Commission on Vivisection was launched. It was charged with investigating the current licensing laws and reporting on the need for any changes. Calls for this commission were directly related to Bayliss’s libel case.

On the other side, in 1906, UCL was boasting about its role as a modernizer of British medicine. That year, it opened a massive new hospital, and

it began construction on a new building to house its freshly reorganized medical school. Key to the whole package was a revised medical curriculum. This put experimental science at the heart of medicine. It required two years work in fundamental sciences as a core curriculum, plus extensive laboratory training and direct experience with vivisection. Not all medical schools in the country supported this new approach. UCL was working to change the system.

Defenders of vivisection in research felt openly taunted by this memorial. Those at UCL took particular umbrage with its inscrip-

tion. This, they complained, repeated the libel at the heart of Bayliss's original legal action. They called it the "famous lie".

In Memory of the Brown Terrier Dog Done to Death in the Laboratories of University College in February 1903 after having endured Vivisection extending over more than Two Months and having been handed over from one Vivisector to Another Till Death came to his Release.

Also in Memory of the 232 dogs Vivisected at the same place during the year 1902. Men and women of England how long shall these things be?

The 1907-08 academic session was the first year of the new curriculum. Term began in September. Soon after the new students arrived, agitation began for action against the memorial in Battersea. On 20 November 1907, a small group of students arrived at the Latchmere Estate. They carried a pry bar and sledgehammer. They managed two attacks on the dog itself before their vandalism was stopped by local police. By evening's end, ten students had been arrested, charged with malicious damage.

Over the next few days, agitations by "medical hooligans" continued. These involved students from each of London's medical schools. Student groups marched through key streets in central London, repeatedly trying to converge on Trafalgar Square and repeatedly being dispersed by police.

Tuesday, 10 December 1907, was a particularly busy day for protesters and police alike. In the afternoon, Oxford and Cambridge held an annual rugby match in west London. Students from the London schools took advantage of the match to draw spectators into large-scale marches to Battersea and Trafalgar

Square. The contingent heading into central London met police challenges throughout the day and evening. The group heading to Battersea found police squads waiting together with large groups of local men and boys ready to thwart their ambitions. To the local residents, these medical students were elite outsiders trying to push around a harmless innocent. Scuffles ensued, but the students were scattered with ease.

Campaigning over the next few weeks, the “anti-doggers” also disrupted meetings of anti-vivisection societies. For example, on 11 December, nearly 200 students invaded a special meeting of the Ealing and Acton Anti-Vivisection Society. One of the planned speakers had been involved in events leading up to Bayliss’s original court action and was expected to defend the Battersea memorial. The students heckled and jeered, lit stink bombs, and blew trumpets. Police intervened, but the meeting had been wrecked. A week later the scene was repeated in a similar meeting at Caxton Hall, near Parliament Square. Pro-memorial meetings and rallies continued over the next few months as shows of defiance against the hecklers.

In danger of vandalism, the Battersea memorial received 24-hour police protection. Alarms were installed. Locals kept a watchful eye. But protection is expensive (guarding the memorial cost £700 per year), and costs have their limits. Over the next year, pro-science and anti-vivisection groups debated ways to resolve their dispute. Attention focused on the precise wording of the memorial’s inscription and how that might be changed to reduce offense while maintaining its central message. Local council

meetings regularly featured long deliberations about this wording, plus deliberations over perhaps returning the statue to its donor.

In early 1910, however, negotiations reached an impasse. The dispute over this memorial seemed unending, unsolvable, and out of proportion to other needs in the borough. After several months threatening to remove the statue, on 9 March 1910, the Council voted to do just that. One councillor summarized the majority's frustration well, exclaiming he was "utterly sick of the matter".

Once ordered, removal was undertaken quickly. In fact, the whole memorial was gone from Latchmere Recreation Ground by the next morning, 10 March. This quick action may or may not have been planned in advance, but advocates of removal knew they needed to move quickly. Pro-memorial groups had threatened a court petition to stop removal should such action be agreed, and that legal action certainly would continue to drag the matter out and add to the growing expense of managing this issue.



**Figure 7:** Medical student "anti-doggers" disrupt an anti-vivisectionist meeting.  
(Source: Ford 1908)



**Figure 8:** The brown dog memorial was removed with shocking speed. Latchmere Recreation Ground, Battersea, London, on 10 March 1910, the day following Battersea Council's decision to remove Whitehead's memorial. (Source: UCL Special Collections Digital Gallery PID 7629)

In an odd turn of events, pro-memorial groups, in fact, were in the High Court the morning of 10 March to file their petition. In a quick ruling, Mr. Justice Neville granted an injunction, restraining the Council from action. However, it already was too late. The memorial was gone. The following day, pro-memorial groups asked the court to compel its return, complaining the Council had acted in bad faith. The judge simply asked the Council to keep the brown dog memorial safe until the full petition was heard in due course.

Anti-vivisectionist campaigners were furious. They rallied in response to the memorial's disappearance. On 19 March 1910, 3000 supporters marched in protest from Hyde Park Corner to Trafalgar Square. This changed nothing.



**Figure 9:** A recent visit to the site of Whitehead's 1906 memorial in Latchmere Recreation Ground, Battersea, London. This location remains as it was in 1910, when the memorial was removed. The sign on the closed gates reads, "No dogs".

The brown dog statue was never shown in public again. The memorial's storage location was not revealed. In fact, it was hidden in the garden shed of a surveyor who worked for Battersea Council.

The High Court petition for the memorial's return was heard in January 1911. Mr. Justice Neville dismissed it quickly. The memorial had been a donation, he said. The Council was under no obligation to follow later demands from the donor, and they could do with the statue whatever they wished.

A tiny note in *The Times* on 24 March 1911 described the memorial's final demise:

End of the 'Brown Dog'

The order made by the Battersea Borough Council on March 8 directing the 'brown dog' to be destroyed has been carried into effect. The dog has been smashed into small pieces by a smith, and the fragments have been disposed of. The orders of the council were completed yesterday by the excision of the inscription from the granite base of the memorial.

The granite fountain, minus the controversial inscription, was made available for re-use elsewhere in the borough. Last minute requests from pro-memorial groups for it to be donated to a museum or returned to the original donor were voted down 40 votes to 14.

## A new dog in the park

On 12 December 1985, London-born sculptor Nicola Hicks (1960-) unveiled a commissioned piece of sculpture in Battersea Park titled, "Monument to the Brown Dog". It was meant to be a reinterpretation of the memorial, not a reconstruction.



**Figure 10:** Nicola Hicks's "Monument" in Battersea Park, London.

"Monument" came early in Hicks's artistic career. She studied sculpture at Chelsea School of Art (1978-1982) and received an MA from the Royal College of Art (1982-1985). Hicks's first exhibition pieces were shown in 1981, and she quickly gained notice. In 1984, Angela Flowers Gallery spotted her talent. She was selected for one of their "Artist of the Day" events for young artists with "talent, originality, promise, and the ability to benefit" from the gallery's support. Experts praised her for maturity and sureness, and she joined the Gallery's inner circle of permanent artists. In 1985, the gallery hosted Hicks's first solo exhibition. In the same year, she presented pieces in shows across the country, and she received the commission to produce the statue for Battersea.



“Monument” clearly shows elements that have come to define Hicks’s overall artistic style. Like all her work, it stresses expression over realism. It shows motion and personality. It draws the viewer into empathy and encourages a search for personality. Unlike most of her sculptures, “Monument” is cast in bronze. Hicks clearly prefers working with more tactile materials, such as straw, clay, and burlap. Her sculpting is accompanied by extensive drawing, preferring charcoal and chalk on plain brown paper. Through the first decade of Hicks’s career, animals were her main focus; thereafter, she turned predominantly towards human figurative work.



Hicks said "Monument" was modelled on her own Jack Russell terrier, Brock. Later sketches of dogs, such as "Bill 1991" and "Brock 1993", show similar features. The same is true of her bronze, "Portrait of Jack". (In March 2013, this sold at Sothebys for £17,000.) It's easy to find common elements, too, in many of the rabbits, horses, and other animals in her diverse menagerie. Hicks's other



**Figures 11-14:** Further views of "Monument" in Battersea Park, London. Floral additions are informal, ephemeral elements.

important bronze involving dogs is “Rocket 6-1 1987”, based on a pet greyhound she adopted from Battersea Dogs Home.

“Monument” was commissioned by the National Anti-Vivisection Society and the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection. In the dedication, they explained their purpose was “to commemorate the suffering of millions of laboratory animals worldwide” and “to ensure that the suffering of one dog is never forgotten.”

When unveiled, “Monument” was located on the grounds of Battersea Park, sited prominently near the boating lake and the Pump House. It drew rather little comment. In 1987, a small group of anti-vivisectionists staged a small ceremony at Hicks’s new statue to commemorate eighty years since the demise of the original.

In 1992, the statue was removed and placed in storage. Wandsworth Council described this as routine, part of a refurbishment scheme for the Pump House and its environs. In 1994, “Monument” reappeared, but in a different location: towards the western end of the park, on the Woodland Walk near the Old English Garden. Anti-vivisectionists interpreted this move as a relegation. However, the location is much more evocative of Hicks’s overall preference for organic settings and works quite well.

Taken as a whole, Hicks’s “Monument” includes more than the bronze sculpture based on Brock. This sits on a rectangular plinth of Portland stone. Each side holds a plaque (for text, see below). One plaque repeats the controversial inscription from Whitehead’s 1906 memorial. Often unnoticed on the plinth are leaves etched

sunken-relief into the Portland stone. These are lightly sprinkled on all sides and on the base, several per panel. As the plinth weathers, this detail is fading.

As a combination, the sculpture and plinth seem disjointed: radically different styles. Plinths of any kind are rare in Hicks's catalogue. It's tempting to think these two parts have quite different origins. Hicks has said very little about "Monument" in print since its unveiling. The expressiveness of the bronze certainly stands the test of time.

Flowers and other decorations are commonplace at "Monument". Normally, these are set on the plinth's top, placed as ephemeral contributions. At various times since its installation on the Woodland Walk, small vases have been attached to the plinth to allow for more elaborate floral arrangements. Who installs and maintains these vases is unknown, but they are testament to the emotion and empathy evoked by Hicks's many skills.



**Figure 15:** Woodland Walk, Battersea Park, approaching "Monument" from the north. This has been the statue's location since 1994.

## Plaques on the plinth

### *Bow side of plinth (front)*

“This monument replaces the original memorial | to the Brown Dog erected by public | subscriptions in Latchmere Recreation | Ground, Battersea, in 1906. The sufferings of | Brown Dog at the hands of vivisectors | generated much protest and mass | demonstrations. It represented the revulsion | of the people of London to vivisection and | animal experimentation. This new monument | is dedicated to the continuing struggle to end | these practices. | After much controversy the former monument | was removed in the early hours of 10th March | 1910. This was the result of a decision taken | by the then Battersea Metropolitan Borough | Council, the previous Council having | supported the erection of the memorial.”

### *Stern side of plinth (rear)*

“Funded by the | British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection | and | the National Anti-Vivisection Society | Site provided by the | Greater London Council | Sculptor | Nicola Hicks | Unveiled on 12th December 1985”

### *Port side of plinth (dog's left)*

“Animal experimentation is one of the greatest | moral issues of our time and should have no | place in a civilised society. | In 1903, 19,084 animals suffered and died in | British laboratories. During 1984 3,497,335 | experiments were performed on live animals |



**Figure 16:** Etched (sunken-relief) leaf highlighting on bow side (front) of the plinth.

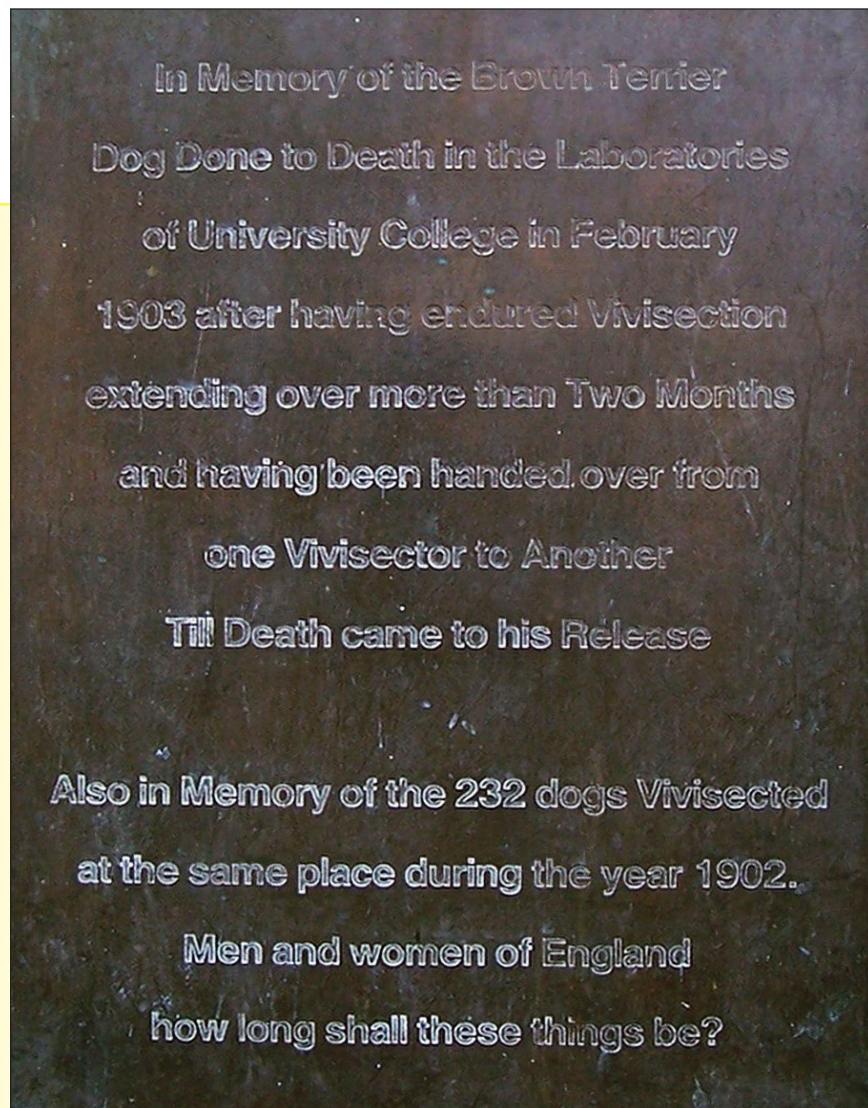


**Figure 17:** Additional view. Nicola Hicks's "Monument" in Battersea Park, London.

in Great Britain. Today, animals are burned, | blinded, irradiated,  
poisoned and subjected to | countless other horrifyingly cruel  
experiments | in Great Britain."

*Starboard side of plinth (dog's right)*

"In Memory of the Brown Terrier | Dog Done to Death in the  
Laboratories | of University College in February | 1903 after  
having endured Vivisection | extending over more than Two  
Months | and having been handed over from | one Vivisector to  
Another | Till Death came to his Release | Also in Memory of  
the 232 dogs Vivisected | at the same place during the year 1902. |  
Men and women of England | how long shall these things be?"



**Figure 18:** Plaque on starboard side (dog's right) of plinth for Hicks's "Monument". This repeated the inscription on Whitehead's 1906 memorial.

## Find out more

These sources offer more information about the brown dog memorials and the brown dog affair. Mason (1997) is highly recommended as a starting point; it is splendid.

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**Figure 19 (opposite page):** Nicola Hicks's "Monument to the brown dog" in Battersea Park, London, located on Woodland Walk. Dimensions (l x w x h, inches): base (37.5 x 37.5 x 6.25), plinth (19.0 x 19.0 x 54.25, centred on base), plaques are 12.0 x 17.25, with lower edge 26.5 above base. The 'P' in upper left corner is graffiti.



This monument replicates the original statue of the Brown Dog erected by public subscription in Battersea Park by the Anti-Vivisection Group, Battersea, in 1902. The original Brown Dog at the hands of vivisectionists generated much protest and mass demonstrations, it represented the concern of the people of London to vivisection and animal experimentation. This new monument is dedicated to the continuing struggle to end these practices.  
After much controversy the former monument was removed in the early hours of 10th March 1910. This was the result of a decision taken by the then Battersea Metropolitan Borough Council, the preceding Council having supported the erection of the monument.



**Figure 20:** Whitehead's memorial to the brown dog installed on the central path in Latchmere Recreation Ground, Battersea, London. The date is unknown, but circa 1906. Burns Road in background. Note the inscription is carved into the granite. The bronze dog shows no sign of the vandalism in November 1907. (Source: Creative Commons)

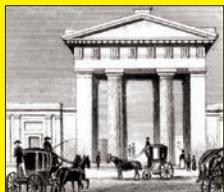
## How did one little dog cause so much trouble?

Anti-vivisection campaigners unveiled their memorial to a little brown dog in 1906 in Battersea, London. That dog's treatment had been the centre of a libel trial making London medical schools the focus of national criticism. This memorial taunted scientists, provoking passions so high that thousands demonstrated and 24-hour police guards were needed to prevent the memorial's destruction. In 1910, it was removed in a midnight operation and never seen in public again.

In 1985, a replacement arrived, given prominence in London's Battersea Park. A new design; a new idea. But it, too, provoked, then quietly it was transferred to an inconspicuous corner of the park. It stands there today. At the very least, it's a lovely, thought-provoking sculpture.

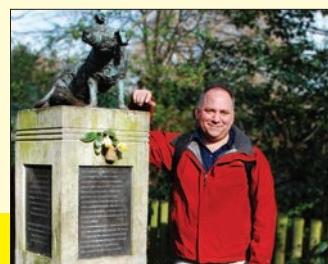
This book compares the two statues, tells a little of their history, and provides an

original photographic record and description of the more recent.



The aim is to revive a small piece of London history. Another aim is to catch a glimpse of a fascinating story involving political activism, history of science, and a small brown terrier dog who came to symbolize an issue we continue to struggle with today.

**Joe Cain** is Professor of History and Philosophy of Biology at University College London. He specializes in the history of evolutionary biology and the history of science and society in London.



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